

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
January 7, 2010

Members Present: Joel Gordon, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo

Absent: Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Kathy Koplow

Select Board Liaison: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Priscilla Robbins (Senior Aide Program)

Guests: Larry Shaffer, Town Manager; Barbara Slovin, President of the Friends of the Amherst SC; Shirley Lauder, Vice-President and Assistant Treasurer of the Friends; Alan Root, Lillian Scott

Welcome: Joel Gordon called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the December 10, 2009 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends' Treasurer Report:

Doris provided a handout showing \$15,032.74 in the checking account and \$69,723.10 in the investment account. **Karen** reported that since the request for membership donations went out in the December/January Senior Spirit, \$5,505 has been received, bringing the FY2010 total to \$8,143 thus far.

Conversation with Larry Shaffer:

Larry has assigned Kay Zlogar to Bangs to assist in the Health Department transition. There will be new offices, new computers and a new director, Julie Federman. The Senior Center shares Bangs with the Health Department and LSSE. The heads of each department plus Kay are having conversations about the building and space. They will make a recommendation to Larry on what the facility and improvements might look like, how they might be implemented, and what the costs would be. Nancy has been a very productive participant in those conversations. Larry will continue to look for opportunities to understand how we can share on a more comprehensive basis the limited resources that we have. We do share a facility. We might want to know how to share clerical or other activities. The philosophical model that has transpired at Town Hall with inspections, planning, zoning and community development is an indication of the model Larry favors. All public organizations will have fewer resources so we need to look for opportunities to gain greater efficiencies and effectiveness with the resources available. We cannot sustain ourselves using the same paradigm and model.

Nancy inquired if the positive news about better than expected revenues at the State level would mean more money for the Town, meaning less of a budget cut. Larry said we would not know until the summer. Larry's budget will come out January 15. "There won't be any discernable changes in the Senior Center budget." Programs will be reduced by \$1.3 million – about an 8% reduction. We will probably lose 13 or 14 employees. Additional revenue has been raised to fill the gap. Health insurance costs have been reduced from a 6% increase to 3%. No COLA for the Police Department is saving \$100,000. Larry will recommend no COLA for non-union employees to save \$130,000. The Select Board will bring up an override proposal to voters on March 23.

We need to prepare ourselves now for a long-term lack of resources. In a slow, intelligent, logical way we need to look at how we can reorganize ourselves to provide equal or greater services at less cost - to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the services we provide. Regarding Bangs, we are looking for areas where there are similar challenges and similar assets and how they can be matched. Is there unnecessary duplication of service? Are we operating as effectively as possible? Is there a single point of entry for gaining services? Is there a single database? Is there a coordinated system for managing Bangs? Is that system open, transparent and accessible to everyone? Larry follows Deming on organizational compression. Every system has to be evaluated to see if it is 'putting out' relative to the resources going in. The system needs to be scrutinized as the needs and resources change.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Friends Fundraiser:

Barbara Slovin spoke enthusiastically about Donna Lee's professionalism and experience and about the program she is planning for April 25, 2010 – the First Annual Amherst Follies. Donna expects that through fundraising activities prior to the event, the Friends can raise all the money necessary to cover the production expenses. Thus, all money raised at the event itself will be profit. The entertainers will be professional. The program will be two hours long. There is much work to do in the planning. The Friends hopes COA members and others will volunteer to help.

Friends Finances:

Doris has been working with Judy Smith, who has volunteered her time to put all three of the SC checkbooks into a computer program - "Quick Book". Doris will take the reports to our accountant today and they will be filed on time. Judy will follow the accounts on a regular basis.

Ad Hoc Survey Committee:

Joel reported. As of December 31, 2009, 703 surveys were returned or 42%. Preliminary analysis shows that 46% of respondents have used at least one service at the Senior Center, including those under the age of 60. The percentage usage increases with increased age group up to about age 80. Three quarters of those over age 75 have used the SC. Ten percent of those under 61 have used the SC. An overwhelming number of those who have used our services were happy with their experience. 52% of responses were from men - 48% from women. Of the 1800 surveys mailed, a large number were unable to be completed for a variety of reasons.

Alan asked about the total population of seniors in Amherst.

Nancy said they are undercounted because many seniors do not return the Town census or do not list their date of birth on the Town census. This is unfortunate because the money we get for senior services is reliant on the number of seniors in the community. Elders hurt themselves by not revealing their age. Nancy will put a notice to that effect in the newsletter.

SHAG (Senior Health Advisory Group): No report.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Barbara said the last meeting brought all 24 town representatives to the Salvo House in Northampton for social interaction. They brainstormed about needs of elders in their area.

NEW BUSINESS

Alan Root raised the issue that too few seniors are represented at Town Meeting. Every year there are 80 Town Meeting member positions open. He encouraged COA members get on the ballot and to encourage other seniors also. We need to develop a strategy regarding what it means to be a senior, its advantages and challenges.

STAFF REPORTS

Various Small Fundraisers, grants:

Nancy reported on proceeds from:

- a) Mini-fair by Parvin Niroomand - \$248.25
- b) Gift-wrapping at Barnes and Noble - \$143.58
- c) Jewish Rehab Center Grant - \$500 to Diane Dixon for teaching the Healthy Eating Program.
- d) Amherst College Center for Community Engagement dinner – 75 people attended. Will be repeated in the spring.
- e) Gift Baskets – the Masons gave out 12 fruit baskets.

f) Big Y Gift Certificates - Town Hall employee donations provided for 12--\$20 Gift Cards.

Amherst College Bank of Exchange Update:

Maura reported that several people have signed up for non-monetary exchanges. Amherst College students are on winter break. The program will resume when they return mid-January. A newsletter will highlight needs and offers.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:31 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held on February 4, 2010 at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the November 12, 2009 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.